

### God's Secret Service Protects Us!

(2 Kings 6:8–17) <sup>8</sup> Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel. After conferring with his officers, he said, “I will set up my camp in such and such a place.” <sup>9</sup> The man of God sent word to the king of Israel: “Beware of passing that place, because the Arameans are going down there.” <sup>10</sup> So the king of Israel checked on the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he was on his guard in such places. <sup>11</sup> This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them, “Tell me! Which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?” <sup>12</sup> “None of us, my lord the king,” said one of his officers, “but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom.” <sup>13</sup> “Go, find out where he is,” the king ordered, “so I can send men and capture him.” The report came back: “He is in Dothan.” <sup>14</sup> Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city. <sup>15</sup> When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. “Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?” the servant asked. <sup>16</sup> “Don’t be afraid,” the prophet answered. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” <sup>17</sup> And Elisha prayed, “Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see.” Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

In Christ Jesus, our Helper in every time of need, dear fellow redeemed,

The Scriptures tell us that as this world’s timeclock ticks down to zero, there will be tragedies of every kind. There will be wars and rumors of wars and because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold. In other words, in these last days, more and more people will become haters, and, as the Bible warns, we Christians will be the objects of their hatred. All this hardship and heartache may prompt us to ask, “What’s going on?” We got an answer to that question last week as Pastor Gawel reminded us that “**...our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.**” (Ephesians 6:12). Of course, the warmongers and haters in this world certainly have flesh and blood, but they are mere pawns, controlled by unseen forces. We might rightly think of them as prisoners of war whose sinful natures enslave them to Satan and his demons. Knowing this makes them no less dangerous to us, but it changes the way we think about them and act toward them. They are, after all, what we once were – captives. In his amazing grace God has given us a gospel that has freed us from Satan’s grasp, and which has the power to do the same for those who still despise Christ and his church.

This gospel, as we were reminded last week, is both shield and sword. It not only serves to defend us, but with its power in hand, we can go on offence. And yet how often we hunker down instead, thinking that the enemy has us outnumbered and outgunned. So, what does our Lord do? In grace upon grace, he puts before us today a real-life story that replaces our faulty perceptions with reality – this reality – we Christians do not fight alone. We followers of Jesus have powerful allies sent and equipped by God himself. I’m talking about the angels that God created to minister to us and keep us safe from harm. We’ll take a closer look at the role they play in our lives under the theme: God’s Secret Service Protects Us! 1)With unequalled intelligence; and 2)With invincible power.

As you may know, our nation’s Secret Service has been in the news lately – not at all an enviable position for an agency, which by its very charter, is designed to “fly under the radar.” The Secret Service came into existence in 1865 under President Lincoln. Its initial purpose was to serve as a

division of the U.S. Treasury, gathering intelligence on and putting a stop to the massive counterfeiting operations that had flourished after our nation's Civil War. As I understand it, these secret treasury agents would infiltrate the counterfeiting operations, collect needed information, and then use it to be in the right place to spoil the plans of the bad guys.

That sounds a bit like what was happening in our text, doesn't it? Here we find Aram, a nation-state, at war with Israel. Aram has a powerful and well-equipped army. It also has a king eager for war. But he has a problem – every piece of battle strategy he devises is immediately found out by Israel's king and is used to stop Aram's army in its tracks. It doesn't take long for Aram's king to decide that he has a mole in his midst. He demands to know who the traitor is. "None of us" his generals insist. "But we can tell you what's going on. Rumor has it that there's an Israeli prophet named Elisha. He's good. In fact, he's not only aware of what we say here in the situation room, he knows and shares even your pillow-talk with Israel's king!" The king of Aram is furious. He gives orders to have Elisha hunted down and captured. When the man of God is spotted in a tiny village, the king sends, not a small team of army rangers to capture him out, but an entire battalion of horses and chariots. The king's war machine surrounds the village of Dothan in the middle of the night. In the morning when Elisha's servant goes outside and sees what's happening he cries out in fear: "**Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?**" (2 Kings 6:15).

Can you relate? It's safe to say that none of us has ever been hunted down by an enemy battalion, but we all have fears of what could or might come our way, fears that if realized would certainly cause us to cry out: "Oh no, what am I going to do?" Maybe we fear the results of a medical text schedule for next week. Maybe we live in dread of getting one of those middle-of-the-night phone calls that can only mean bad news. Maybe we live in fear that we'll end up alone in life. Or we fear that one day we'll run out of money and become dependent on others to care for us. These fears may vary from person to person or even from one stage of life to the next, but all of them have this in common – every one of our fears causes our enemy Satan to salivate. Because more than anything, he wants us to live in dread. He wants us so preoccupied with the things that scare us, that we have not thought of turning to our Lord and his Word. Nothing pleases the devil more than to hear a Christian cry out: "What am I going to do?"

Elisha had a ready answer to his servant's question. "What are we going to do? I'll tell you what we're not going to do, we're not going to cave into fear. Don't be afraid." What a wakeup call! Think of the wonders of God that the servant had seen in his work with Elisha! And yet, when push comes to shove, his heart melts in terror. Are we any different? Think of the sermons we've heard, the Bible passages we've memorized, the hymns we've sung – so many of them pointing us to the Lord's sure promises, and yet when troubles threaten us, our hearts begin to race, and our knees begin to knock like those who have never even heard the name of Jesus. Sinners that we are, we fold under pressure, giving full credence to Satan's age-old question: "Did God really say you can trust him?"

Thank God for the "Elishas" in our lives who take a moment to point out the foolishness of our sinful doubt and do so with such love and concern. I say, "thank God," because when you think about it, those who doubt God deserve to be miserable, not just for a few panicked moments or hours, but for an eternity of despair. After all, what is doubt but unbelief? And yet, our God does not want us to be miserable, not even for a second. So, he does not treat us as our sin deserves. Instead, speaking through his prophet he reminds us today: "**Don't be afraid. Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.**" (2 Kings 6:16). Dear Christian, these are words for us to memorize and carry with us every moment of the day! When fears plague us, when doubts attack us, when guilt haunts us, repeats these words, "*Don't be afraid. Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.*" These simple sentences are a beautiful summary of the truths spelled out so clearly in Romans, chapter 8, where Paul reminds us of how the three persons of the Trinity are on our side, the Father loving us from eternity, the Spirit constantly interceding for us,

and the Son giving up his very life for us, suffering in our place the hell we deserve for our doubt and unbelief and all our sin. These Bible truths lead Paul to conclude – **“If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:31-32).** Yes, those who are with us are more—more knowing, more powerful, more loving, and more determined to keep us saved and safe than those who are against us and who mean to ruin us eternally.

Believing this, you can be confident that our Father in heaven, who has already given us his one and only Son to save us, now also gives us and our loved ones in Christ the protection of his Secret Service. Elisha wanted to calm his servant’s nerves with this truth so he prayed, **“Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see.” Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (2 Kings 6:17).** Let’s offer this same prayer for ourselves and our brothers and sisters in Christ. We may never see even one of God’s angels with our physical eyes, but it good and right for us to pray that God might give us eyes of faith to see the evidence of their work in our day to day lives – how they are guarding and keeping us safe, body and soul. Certainly, the Creator of the universe could do this without any assistance, but he chooses to look after us, in part, through the angels he made for us. This pleases God and it pleases his angels, who are able to protect us perfectly because they operate with the unequalled intelligence provided by our all-knowing God. God knows in advance every danger that threatens us both physically and spiritually. Just as he knew the plans of Aram’s king, so he knows the plans of our enemy, Satan. He knows the traps and snares that have been set for us. And because he does, he knows exactly how to position his Secret Service angels to spare us from all danger. We see this in our text. Aram’s king thought he had Elisha and his servant surrounded, but, in truth, it was God’s Secret Service, positioned on the high ground, who had the drop on that enemy army.

The same is true in our lives. No matter where we go, no matter what we do, God’s agents are there in advance to safeguard us. This is the Scripture’s promise: **“...[The LORD] will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways;” (Psalm 91:11).** How many of these secret, unseen agents are assigned to our detail? Scripture doesn’t say. I don’t know if each of us always has a particular guardian angel with us or if a host of angels provides us with protection as needed. Either way, we can be sure of this, when called upon, they never, ever fail us because God’s Secret Service Protects us with invincible power.

It’s no coincidence that when God opened the eyes of Elisha’s servant, he saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire. Remember, Aram’s king had sent horses and chariots to do away with one man. He sees the king’s bet and raises him. Aram’s army must have looked like a bunch of toy soldiers in comparison to those fiery heavenly hosts. The enemy was no match for God’s Secret Service. Elisha and his servant were perfectly safe – as are we, dear friends. The angel agents that God sends to protect us have invincible power. No force here on earth or from hell below can match their might. I suppose you and I will never know how often we have been shielded from a disaster that God never permitted to touch us, the sin that never tempted us, the accident that never happened thanks to our God and his Secret Service.

And when troubles and heartaches do come, don’t despair. Our Loving Lord has perfect prior knowledge of these things too. In fact, troubles come only with our Father’s permission and then only in keeping with his perfect plan to use them to our eternal advantage. This is God’s unailing promise! And so we keep praying: Open our eyes, dear Lord, so that we may see and believe that those who are with us are more than those who are with them, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.